



Travis County Fire Marshal's Office

Hershel Lee, Fire Marshal
P. O. Box 1748, Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-4621, fax (512) 854-6471

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Specific types of fireworks restricted in County

With Travis County under dangerously dry conditions, County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe invoked a local disaster declaration, by power of Government Code Section 418.108, restricting the sale and use of skyrockets with sticks and missiles with fins during the upcoming holiday season in unincorporated parts of Travis County. All other fireworks will be legally sold in the County from December 20 to January 1.

By law, fireworks are regulated by a local disaster declaration by the County Judge, as in this case, or a separate order from Commissioners Court. In order for Commissioners Court to restrict sales, the Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI)* must be at 575 or greater, and the Court must order the restriction prior to December 15. On Friday, December 14, the KBDI is at 550, which is below the restriction qualification. Fireworks may not be regulated beyond the KBDI restriction, except by local disaster declaration by the County Judge.

The Fire Marshal's Office reminds those using fireworks during the holidays to celebrate the season with caution. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, Travis County is under severe drought conditions. The County also weathered a November in the top five driest on record, and the first part of December has offered little relief. In addition, the Texas Forest Service reports that Travis County is classified in moderate fire danger, but recent days were also in the high fire danger category.

"With large amounts of dry vegetation and the low humidity produced by North winds that are common in December, we face an increased fire danger," said Travis County Fire Marshal Hershel Lee. "Anyone who chooses to use fireworks should be mindful of the dry conditions and follow safety steps to avoid starting a fire."

The Travis County Fire Marshals' office recommends following these safety tips:

- Buy from reliable fireworks sellers only and never attempt to make your own fireworks.
- To detonate fireworks, find a flat surface, away from buildings, dry leaves and grass.
- Have water on hand in case of a fire.

- Insist on adult supervision when buying or setting off fireworks.
- Read and follow label directions, warnings and instructions.
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never try to re-light fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Never give fireworks to small children; even sparklers can cause serious burns.

The sale and possession of fireworks are prohibited within the city limits of Austin. In addition, fireworks are not allowed in Travis County Parks and parks managed by Travis County.

**KBDI is an index used to determine forest fire potential by measuring soil moisture within the first eight inches of soil. The index ranges from 0 to 800, where a drought index of 0 represents no moisture depletion, and an index of 800 represents absolutely dry conditions.*

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Submitted by: Lisa Block, PIO, Travis County Emergency Services